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Cornhusker Economics

Cooperative Extension

Institute of Agriculture & Natural Resources
Department of Agricultural Economics
University of Nebraska – Lincoln
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Three Potentially Effective Approaches to Community Change

Market Report	Yr Ago	4 Wks Ago	5/13/05
<u>Livestock and Products,</u>			
<u>Weekly Average</u>			
Nebraska Slaughter Steers, 35-65% Choice, Live Weight	\$88.73	\$91.83	\$89.65
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame, 550-600 lb	121.05	136.80	143.24
Nebraska Feeder Steers, Med. & Large Frame 750-800 lb	110.25	114.41	119.08
Choice Boxed Beef, 600-750 lb. Carcass	159.31	155.03	155.63
Western Corn Belt Base Hog Price Carcass, Negotiated	81.72	70.30	74.78
Feeder Pigs, National Direct 45 lbs, FOB	46.65	69.82	58.35
Pork Carcass Cutout, 185 lb. Carcass, 51-52% Lean	83.71	68.26	79.21
Slaughter Lambs, Ch. & Pr., 90-160 lbs., Shorn, Midwest	97.00	105.00	107.00
National Carcass Lamb Cutout, FOB	215.01	260.60	250.47
<u>Crops,</u>			
<u>Daily Spot Prices</u>			
Wheat, No. 1, H.W. Omaha, bu	3.65	2.75	2.80
Corn, No. 2, Yellow Omaha, bu	2.73	1.83	1.79
Soybeans, No. 1, Yellow Omaha, bu	9.51	6.08	6.10
Grain Sorghum, No. 2, Yellow Columbus, cwt	4.45	2.60	2.75
Oats, No. 2, Heavy Minneapolis, MN, bu	1.66	1.82	1.56
<u>Hay</u>			
Alfalfa, Large Square Bales, Good to Premium, RFV 160-185 Northeast Nebraska, ton	115.00	115.00	115.00
Alfalfa, Large Rounds, Good Platte Valley, ton	62.50	62.50	62.50
Grass Hay, Large Rounds, Good Northeast Nebraska, ton	57.50	57.50	57.50
* No market.			

Communities change all the time businesses come and go, streets and other infrastructure are improved and schools grow or constrict depending upon their enrollment. Even with the wide range of changes in our communities, research shows that there are really only three commonly used approaches to implement change. They include the: 1) self-help; 2) technical assistance; and 3) conflict approach.

According to authors Jan and Cornelia Flora in *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change* (2004), these approaches can be used individually on an issue or they can be used as a cluster of actions, depending on the situation. Each approach has positive and negative trade-offs.

Self-Help

One of the most common ways this approach is demonstrated is through activities that involve a visioning and goal setting process. The strategic planning process typically involves several steps - recruiting participants that represent diverse interests, determining the desired future condition, identifying community assets, setting priorities, generating community commitment, planning the implementation action steps, completing the action items and finally, evaluating the results.

Pros: Self-help is a great way to get local buy-in on a project. It can use the talents and experiences of local citizens as assets to further a cause.

Cons: A community needs to pay special attention to get a cross-section of community stakeholders to the table or priorities can be set by default by those who attend.

Technical Assistance

In its purest form, this approach relies on an outside expert to implement a predetermined solution to a predetermined situation. In practice, it could be to develop the effectiveness and efficiency of a solution or to design a way to perform a particular task. In many of the situations where technical assistance is used, the expert does not question the selection of the task or how it was determined. The consultant merely develops a plan to implement the selected solution.

Pros: It allows communities to access outside expertise in areas that may be highly technical or that may demand credentials for further funding or implementation. A common example is the use of community planners and infrastructure experts (water, waste water, streets, etc.). When linked with an initial self-help planning process, this is a great way to turn ideas into action.

Cons: If an expert comes in and does not do their homework, the community could pay for a solution that looks good on paper but does not work. Communities need to be on guard for “boilerplate solutions.”

Conflict

Some may be surprised to see this listed as an approach to community change. Conflict, differences of opinion or group disharmony, can and does produce change. In a positive sense, the dialogue that develops in a heated situation allows individuals to express new and different views. It is our unique individual perspectives that add richness to the change process. It is also this uniqueness that makes it nearly impossible for immediate agreement in group settings. If you accept conflict or disagreements in group environments as the norm, conflict becomes a very natural part of the development process.

Pros: Conflict can be used as a rallying point, especially in situations where something or someone from the outside is proposing a change that is deemed undesirable. For instance, conflict as an approach is often effective when it becomes an “us vs. them” issue, such as the locating of a nuclear waste dump or power lines, or when the possibility of school consolidation is proposed.

Cons: The resulting debate of ideas can easily tear communities apart if the dialogue moves away from the issue and becomes personal. Comments can easily get out of hand in public meetings - minority and majority viewpoints can erode community cohesion.

Common Factors for Success

Each of these approaches, according to Flora and Flora (2004), rely on two critical factors for effective implementation: 1) linkages with the outside, and 2) the planning process.

Linkages

- Now more than ever, communities are reaching out to identify assets regardless of where they are located. Regardless of the approach, financial resources, human talents and expertise, as well as social connections are all commonly used community linkages with the outside. Strategic partnerships are another way to link with outside resources.

Planning

- It is a key component of development, regardless of the approach used. In the self-help model, stakeholder planning is critical in setting the priorities and implementing the plan. In the technical assistance approach, the consultant works with an end result in mind, requiring a set of planning steps to be devised. When using conflict, the planning agenda may need to specifically incorporate extensive information gathering and flexibility, but the basic process is the same.

Community change is a constant. Sometimes it is dramatic, but often it is an on-going, often unseen effort. Different approaches to community change may be used, but ultimately it is the linkages to outside resources and the use of the planning process that are the critical factors to the effectiveness of the change.

Resources:

Flora, C. and J. Flora. (2004) *Rural Communities: Legacy and Change*. Westview Press: Boulder, CO.

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